

March 29, 2010

Call to Order—Chairman, Senator Emmett Hanger called the meeting to order.

Members present: Senator Emmett Hanger, Chair; Virgil Cook, Secretary; Donna Gateley; John Pleasants; Diane Sandidge; Ralph Shelman

School and state staff: Superintendent Nancy Armstrong; Doug Cox, liaison for the Department of Education; Kathy Campbell, staff interpreter; Jack Johnson, principal of the deaf department; Nathan McLamb, Director of Human Resources for VSDB; Janice Rankin, Director of Operations; Becky Plesko-DuBois, Director of Clinical Services; Carol Swindell, assistant principal for the blind department; Samantha Vanterpool, Office of the State Attorney General; Judy Wyatt, Legislative Aide to Delegate Steve Landes

Visitors: Rachel Bavister, VSDB alumna and President of the Virginia Association of the Deaf; Wayne Frick- retired teacher of the deaf; Wayne Hite, school athletic director

Because there was no quorum at the beginning of the meeting, Senator Hanger proceeded immediately to staff reports.

Staff Reports

Budget, Nate McLamb—For FY2010, the VSDB budget was reduced by \$999,954. The impact of this reduction was lessened, because we had year-end savings in FY2009, which we were able to use to off-set part of the FY2010 reduction. The savings in FY2009, were due to a personnel reduction of 9.5 positions. For FY2011, a reduction of \$1,550,738, a 15% cut, is proposed by the legislature. We have identified the following budget reduction strategies:

- Foundation funds (\$25,000) - We are proposing to use foundation funds to purchase things we normally purchase with general funds.
- Eliminate Blackberries (\$20,000)
- Reduce Food Service costs (\$15,000)- This reduction will mean fewer snacks in the dorms and on the buses.
- Reduce Public Safety staffing (\$28,000)- We are proposing to reduce security staffing to one officer per shift.
- Increase Medicaid reimbursements (\$35,000)
- Reduce staff after-school activities (\$20,000)- As an energy-saving move, we plan to reduce after-school activities where staff often stay at school past normal working hours.
- Eliminate professional development (\$6,000)
- Reduce tuition reimbursement (\$5,000) - We will limit reimbursement to \$2,000 per teacher.
- Eliminate paid internships (\$12,000)
- Reduce utility costs (\$40,000)
- Decrease discretionary purchases (\$60,000)
- Current vacancies (\$350,000)- We currently have 8 vacancies which are not being filled.
- State funding for students (\$500,000)

With these strategies, we still have an additional \$430,730 that we must cut from personnel services. We are considering the following personnel service reduction strategies:

- Consolidation of classes for students
- Transfer of staff to alternate assignments
- Reduction of wage staff
- Decreased planning periods for teachers
- Increased bus duties for teacher assistants and residential advisors
- Reduced work schedules for staff (part-time)
- Reduced work periods for staff (10/11 month)
- Layoffs

We think we have taken out as much as possible from the instructional budget. We anticipate 6 vacancies from retirement and other personnel actions, in addition to the current 8 vacancies, for a total of 14 vacancies. When this is added to the 9.5 staffing reduction for FY2009, the total personnel reduction is 23.5 positions or 12.4% of our staffing. We will reduce wage staff as much as possible. We will reduce planning time by half, and assign faculty such duties as dining-room supervision. Residential and teaching assistants will be riding buses more often, meaning that they will be in class less time, thereby reducing overtime. We can reduce some staff to 32 hours and still keep health coverage. We anticipate some layoffs. Employees who are laid off will receive severance benefits, which includes severance pay, and health insurance and life insurance benefits for a year. These employees will be placed on layoff without pay for one year. If no positions become available within the year, these employees will be separated at the end of the year. We are unsure of how many we will have to lay off.

Student Evaluation Information, Becky Plesko-DuBois—There are many cuts affecting students. We expect about 104 students for the fall. We have accepted 25 so far. There was one student whose needs we could not meet.

There were 10 applications for the blind department.

There are many reasons why students seek admission.

1. Some want to enroll in the blind department because they have not been given the SOL (Standards of Learning) tests.
2. Some wish to increase their independent-living skills.
3. Some need O&M instructions.
4. There are not enough Braille instructors across the state.

We often learn that applicants have other disabilities. They are often socially isolated.

There were 15 applications for the deaf department.

1. Some want access to fluent ASL skills. It is hard for someone to learn when he/she does not have a fluent first language.
2. Some have not been administered SOL tests.
3. Some have no friends.

4. Many cannot engage in extra-curricular activities because they have no interpreter.
5. Students with an average intelligence are often inappropriately placed with students of below-average intelligence.

We also learn of other handicaps. To address this issue, we look for help from the Department for clinical support services. We are looking beyond the school days to foster development. We are engaging in considerable program development. We are using both applied behavioral analysis and floor time for several of the autistic children. A team is looking at dietary problems. We have started a new independent-living skills program in the dorms. We are encouraging students to get involved in their IEP process. We have expanded services for deaf-blind students. We are also expanding off-campus work-study employment.

Repairs and Upgrades--Janice Rankin--As of February 1, we are 1% above our budget, which is good in light of the severe winter. The metal-roof project is nearly complete. Painting is going well. There will be safety upgrades after the children leave for the summer. We have bid out other safety projects. We are updating the heating system in Main Hall so that it will be integrated with the campus-wide system. Lead paint problems are on the outside of buildings.

Approval of Minutes for December 22--Ralph Shelman pointed out the misspelling of his name. John Pleasants moved that the minutes be approved with the one correction. The motion passed.

Staff Diversity, Nate McLamb--The proportion of minorities on the staff are 8% black and 1% Hispanic. We have 9% minority, slightly below the 12% for the local area. Part of the recruiting problem is the lack of teacher preparation programs in the state. The only Deaf-and-Hard-of-Hearing program is at Radford University while the Vision-Impaired program is offered by a consortium of universities which include Radford University, James Madison University, George Mason University, Norfolk State University, and Old Dominion University.

Statutes that authorized forming the board of visitors provide for the non-renewal of contracts for probationary teachers, with the board handling appeals. Nathan McLamb proposed having an executive committee to review such appeals. He proposed that a rule be established requiring the terminated employee to request a conference with the superintendent within 10 days of notice of termination. The superintendent must hold such a conference within 30 days. The superintendent's decision would be eligible for appeal in writing to the board. The board would then review that decision and make a final decision. Samantha Vanterpool recommended adopting this proposal that both gives due process and conforms to the statutes. Donna Gateley move that the board instruct staff to develop policy to be presented at the next board meeting. The motion passed.

Senator Hanger then asked the staff to draft a policy to present at the next board meeting. The proposal will be distributed to members before the next meeting.

Information Technology Update, Doug Wright--When the board was established, school staff began working with VITA to separate functions because of the hybrid nature of the school's situation. During spring break they will be separating the agency functions from the school functions. Dr. Armstrong and her staff will be on an agency network, and the dorms and classrooms will be on a school network. Before, students could not have access to a network. Google has a program called Google Apps for school applications. As a school, we get the service free. The staff has experienced problems with accessing e-mail accounts when they were off campus. There are also problems with document sharing. With the new system, collaboration should be easier.

Deaf Department News, Jack Johnson, principal for the deaf department--We have four interns from Radford University in our program. We will have two interns next fall and six in the spring. We have sent students to the Academic Bowl, where they compete with other scholars from deaf schools. This experience offers students a chance to develop leadership skills. On March 26, we sent a student to Rochester, New York, to compete in a national science fair. The invitation to that fair is phenomenal. We sent athletes to two tournaments. The boys went to the Mason Dixon tournament, and the girls to the Mason Dixon Tournament in Florida. Both teams placed sixth out of 11.

Blind Department News, Carol Swindell, assistant principal for the blind department--Our goal-ball team participated in a tournament in South Carolina. We have a track team but no basketball team. Our students' SOL scores have improved. Mary Murray--She first spoke about the athletic program because of her experience working in this program. Because of declining enrollment, we no longer compete with area high schools. We can compete with other blind schools, however. We have a volley-ball team. Soccer has become more popular because it is easier to compete in soccer. We have a problem with travel expenses to out-of-state schools.

The Stuart Center will open in May. We have worked very amicably with the architects in designing the new dormitories. John Pleasants asked about fundraising for some of these events: transportation for example. Students have been allowed to engage in some fundraising.

Public Comment, Wayne Hite, athletic director for the school--The track team is competing with area schools. There is a problem with soliciting for funds because we are a state agency. Colleges and universities have foundations to supply funds. We need a way to solicit corporate sponsorship. Senator Hanger indicated that we should be able to develop a policy for soliciting funds through the foundation. Samantha Vanterpool indicated that there could be more flexibility with the foundation.

More Staff Reports

Nancy Armstrong, Superintendent---

1. **Foundation Update**. John Flora, an attorney from Harrisonburg has drawn up bylaws. The draft has gone through the Attorney General's office for comment. Most of the foundation members will be outside of the school.
2. Construction. The Stuart building will soon be opened. Furniture has been ordered. The April target deadline has been moved to May because of inspections. The ground breaking for the new, academic building and ribbon cutting ceremony for Stuart are

scheduled for May 19. The dormitory for deaf boys is under construction and is scheduled for completion by February of next year. Harrison Hall should come down this summer. A blind dormitory on this spot is to be completed by May of next year. The blind students will be moved from Swanson and Peery into Byrd to make way for the renovation of Peery. Occupational therapy and physical therapy will be in the present gym in Swanson. The elementary school will eventually be in Peery. The construction company has been very accommodating and a pleasure to work with. The construction is about 25% under budget because of the scarcity of work.

Senator Hanger and Nancy Armstrong.

Progress report on Senator Hanger's bill, SB333, parent-Infant Provider Bill--The purpose of the bill is to provide support for children from 0-21. We are starting small because we do not have the money to fund a position. We will have to ask for payment for services. Since the program was discontinued, the elementary program has been dwindling quite significantly.

Payroll Issues, Janice Rankin--Time cards are submitted on Monday or Tuesday to the Department of Payroll Accounting in Richmond. We can send the report by e-mail in a couple of days. Then it takes time to process time sheets. We have had situations where people do not get paid. Others were paid only for overtime. We get the needed information on the afternoon of the day they are due.

There are no savings to the state.

Unfinished Business.

Update on letter to assistant superintendent of special education at DOE concerning notification of parents with blind or deaf children about VSDB--There is no problem if the school requests that DOE send out a letter. Nothing went out this year. October of this year would be a good time to send out the letter.

New Business.

Corporate sponsors for athletics department and other non-academic functions--Senator Hanger reiterated that such sponsorship is appropriate when donations are made via the foundation.

Submission of Minutes, Virgil Cook--Virgil Cook expressed his concern that there are no clear deadlines for the secretary to submit minutes. He Moved that minutes be submitted within 30 days of a board meeting or at least two weeks before scheduled meetings, whichever comes first. The motion passed.

John Pleasants raised the issue of whether the board could meet more than four times a year. If we need to call a special meeting, would that meeting count as one of the quarterly meetings? Senator Hanger responded that when he consulted the statute, he saw no conflict if we need to meet more than four times a year. Senator Hanger will check the statute again so that we can consider the issue at the next meeting.

Senator Hanger informed the board that Delegate Lohr has been appointed commissioner of agriculture effective on April 1. The speaker of the house will appoint a replacement, and we will have to elect a new vice chair.

Executive Committee—Senator Hanger appointed Virgil Cook and Donna Gateley to the executive committee. Donna Gateley agreed if she can meet remotely.

Next Board Meeting—Senator Hanger observed that if we meet too late in June, it may be harder for people to come because of vacations. Early June might be a better choice.

Adjournment—The meeting was adjourned at 1:55.

Respectfully submitted: Virgil A. Cook, Secretary